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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
SECTION

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# Industrial Ideals — in — Industrial Relations

*Pastoral Letter of His Eminence,  
William Cardinal O'Connell*

NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE COUNCIL  
SOCIAL ACTION DEPARTMENT



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## RELIGIOUS IDEALS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

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### PEACE, THE HOPE OF THE WEARY WORLD

**T**O establish peace in the world Christ came among men. The pagan nations, ignorant of God and His laws, had attempted, with but small measure of success, the reconciliation of human and divine rights and duties. They knew no law but the law of force. Brutal tyranny stalked abroad. Gods there were, but none with power to help the weak. There was a God of War and a God of Wealth, a God of Beauty and a God of Pleasure. There was no God of poverty, of humility, of pain. Envy, jealousy, hatred of man for man, of tribe for tribe, of nation for nation naturally followed the rule of might. There was no

place for Justice and Charity. These emanate from God—and when He is banished from society, peace and good will among men are banished with Him. Modern paganism, too, has its gods. Peace is not among them.

The heart of the world is tired of strife. Peace—Peace is on every lip, the echo of every heart. But there is no peace, and there will be no peace until the cause of strife is removed. It would be false optimism to say, "All is well," when we know that with the rapid growth of wealth the selfishness of men has kept pace; that the gap between rich and poor is constantly widening; that the very basis of society is being disrupted; that irreligion and infidelity are blasting away the very foundations of faith. Not with a wail of pessimism do we raise our voice but with affectionate warning. Modern paganism has done its work, but the God of our fathers is with us still. He will save us. We have but to put into practice the justice and charity of Christ. When Chris-

tian ideals rule the world, then, and not till then, we shall have peace. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, if thou didst but know the things which are for thy peace!"

The existence of deep-seated discontent and far-reaching resentment in the industrial world of today is not to be questioned. Wage-earners are restless; the wealthy are apprehensive; petty strikes are of daily occurrence; great strikes threaten national disaster; class consciousness is on the increase; class hatred is being fomented by unscrupulous agitators.

## THE REMEDY FOR STRIFE

Over a quarter of a century ago Leo XIII with unerring instinct placed his finger on the sore spots of the modern industrial world and offered religious ideals for labor and capital. He pointed out that large number of workers were destitute and that "TO EXERCISE PRESSURE ON THE INDIGENT AND THE DESTITUTE FOR THE SAKE OF GAIN, AND TO GATHER ONE'S PROFIT OUT OF THE NEED OF ANOTHER, IS CONDEMNED BY ALL LAWS, HUMAN AND DIVINE. TO DEFRAUD ANYONE OF WAGES THAT ARE HIS DUE IS A CRIME THAT CRIES TO THE AVENGING ANGER OF HEAVEN....THE RICH MUST RELIGIOUSLY REFRAIN FROM CUTTING DOWN THE WORKMAN'S EARNINGS, WHETHER BY FORCE, OR BY FRAUD, OR USURIOUS DEALING; AND WITH



ALL THE GREATER REASON FOR THE LABORING MAN IS, AS A RULE, WEAK AND UNPROTECTED, AND BECAUSE HIS SLENDER MEANS SHOULD IN PROPORTION TO THEIR SCANTINESS BE ACCOUNTED SACRED....WERE THESE PRECEPTS CAREFULLY OBEYED AND FOLLOWED OUT WOULD THEY NOT BE SUFFICIENT OF THEMSELVES TO KEEP UNDER ALL STRIFE AND ITS CAUSES?"

No one can doubt that had the voice of the Pontiff been heeded the world today would be immeasurably better of. But the new paganism of materialist philosophy has passed the portals of the schools and has poisoned the very sources of civil and industrial life. "Might is right," "the survival of the fittest," "the battle to the strong"—these are principles of action in the industrial world. The general public has grown distrustful and suspicious, and the consequent note of pessimism has wrought incalculable harm to the business prosperity of the world. Misguided men,

oftentimes ignorant of the true issues involved, have lent themselves to the propaganda of radicalism. Not only are present systems of government the object of increasing attacks, but even the more fundamental ideals, the ideals of the family, of religion, and of authority itself.

Without minimizing the evils of the present industrial system, we nevertheless refuse to believe in the hopelessness of the situation. We believe that the present evils can be gradually remedied; that reforms can be introduced, and that the world will go forward to better and higher things.

We believe that labor and capital can get together. Labor needs capital, capital needs labor. In the recent hour of national distress, labor and capital worked together for the successful prosecution of the War. There were mistakes and treachery and greed here and there, but they were exceptional. This shows that they can work together in peace and harmony for the common weal.

It would be particularly sad at this time,

when the world has been torn apart, when large sections of Europe have been devastated, when famine and plague are raging, if we, the leaders in world production, should lose this blessed opportunity of rendering service to stricken humanity, friend and foe alike; if we who were so ready to furnish weapons of destruction should fail so lamentably in the work of reconstruction.

The fundamental mistake in the attempts at solution is a mistake in the point of view. Statesmen and legislatures, philanthropists and economists, have persisted in regarding the problem as a merely economic one. Economists, philanthropists and statesmen may alleviate distress. They cannot heal the wounds of society. These lie too deep. For underneath the turmoil lies a wrong philosophy of life, a misunderstanding of the destiny of man and his relations to his Creator. The question of human and divine rights involved in the industrial issues of the day is a moral question. The well-being of

individuals and families is concerned. The reciprocal rights and duties of those who make claims and of those who resist them give the problem a moral aspect which cannot be ignored. It is above the domain of mere economics.

To find a remedy for the evils of the industrial world, to reconcile conflicting interests, to make practical application of the religious ideals of Christianity in everyday life, to restore peace on earth, is a work which should appeal to every lover of his faith and of his flag, and to which every Christian and every patriot may well consecrate his most sacred endeavor.

No crusade for social betterment can succeed without justice and charity. Men and nations must return to truth, to a sincere and persevering effort to practice Christian virtue, justice, equity, brotherly love. The principles underlying social reform must postulate the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. God is Creator and Lawgiver. His laws may not be violated with impunity by State or

individual. His sanctions are inevitable. Social action must be based on love of God and love of neighbor. Without these principles there will be no solution to the difficulties with which we are beset. This is the teaching of the Church and "we affirm without hesitation that all the striving of men will be in vain if they leave out the Church."

Standing securely upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, she approaches the question with confidence in the exercise of rights which manifestly pertain to her. She says to every man born into this world, rich and poor, powerful and weak: Harken to the Gospel of Christ—listen to the principles on which alone society can stand. She is by right and principle the unflinching defender of the people's rights. She alone has taught the rich their duty to the poor, the divine authority of law, the personal responsibility of every man. Today she condemns the cruel arrogance of wealth and power; tomorrow with voice no less authoritative she condemns mob

law and mob violence. If she espouses the cause of the poor it is only on condition that right is with them. She is no truckler to majorities, no mere timeserver. She can lose and wait. Time and the all-prevailing justice of God is her vindication. She protects the State and the trampled rights of the minority when right and justice are on their side. She faces with unflinching courage both the unjust violence of mobs and of kings.

She has defended and ever will defend rights inalienable to men, such as the right to live, to be educated, to enjoy liberty, to labor, to rest with recreation, to worship God. These rights spring from the very nature of man himself. They are not concessions from the State or from society. Under no condition can man be deprived of these rights. They are personal, inalienable, inborn. It is true that these rights carry with them corresponding obligations and duties, chief of which is the duty to work.

## LABOR A BLESSING

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.” “If any man will not work, neither let him eat.” There is no place in the modern world or in society for the idle. Activity of either production or service is obligatory on all. This is an obligation which springs from the need of society, but even more so from the need of the individual. Work is our protection against moral, intellectual and physical atrophy. The rich man is not freed from this obligation. He is released from the common burdens, but by this very fact, he is the more obliged to serve society.

However, we must not look upon labor as merely the expenditure of muscular or intellectual energy, or as a commodity to be bought and sold. There is a moral element which must be considered. Man is not an irresponsible machine. He has

intellect and free will—an immortal soul. He is personally responsible for his acts.

Even before the fall of man, “the Lord God took man and put him into a paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it.” With the fall of man the rich fertility of the earth was gone. “Cursed is the earth in thy work, in labor and toil shalt thou labor all the days of thy life.” But the true man still finds, even in irksome toil, some traces of that primitive joy which filled the heart of man as he labored in the garden of Paradise.

To till the earth, and subdue it, and rule it, was part of God’s first commandment to men. Without labor the earth would be wild and uncultivated. Without labor there would be no progress in civilization. Christianity has sanctified labor. To the pagan, a laborer was a slave. To the Christian, he is a son of God. St. Peter was a fisherman, St. Paul was a tentmaker. Indeed, labor is the university in which all men are trained. We learn obedience, self-sacrifice, patience, fortitude, and



oftentimes humility when we compare our work with that of our fellow workmen. The good workman, when treated as he should be treated, is happy in his work.

To enjoy work, however, man must be maintained in a state of physical efficiency. Suitable wages are necessary that he may have food, clothing, shelter, and recreation. Demands on endurance must be reasonable. Working conditions should be pleasant and healthful as far as possible. The workman thus treated should be honest, subordinate, devoted to the interests of his employer, and considerate of his associates. He should be conscious that he is carrying out the divine command to labor. If society is to be improved, the worker must do his part. The Church is not afraid to demand that the laborer fulfill his rightful obligations. He should be honest in his labor. Just agreements made with the employer should be faithfully kept. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The worker should safeguard the property of the employer as

if it were his own. He should make the interest of his firm his interest. He should be reasonable in disputes and urge his claims in a fair and just way.

INDUSTRIAL  
RELATIONS  
SECTION

## THE DUTY OF EMPLOYERS

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We have counseled workers to be just and charitable. We preach the same commandments of Christ to employers. We would even urge them to do more than justice demands and to emulate the charity of Christ and His Apostles which knew no limit or bound. As an obligation, not of charity, but of strict justice in which if they fail they will be answerable to God, if not to men, the employers should see to it that of their profits a fair amount is set apart for the wage of their workingmen, that they, too, may live and may support their families. Employers should be faithful to the just agreements which they have made. Let them remember that before God, Who is no respecter of persons, all men are equal. Let them see the image of God in the workingman for God has created every man to His own image and like-

ness. Let them have regard for the dignity of the workingman, his right to health, to safety, and to recreation, that he may restore the energy expended in toil. Let them see to it that ample time is given not only for requisite recreation but for the due performance of civil, domestic, and religious duties.

The evils and abuses of the present industrial system cannot be too strongly deplored. The aloofness of the employer from the worker, the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, the oppression of the worker, are abuses which, while not universal, are still altogether too common. Stories of excessive profits and low wages, of heartless dismissals, of inhuman disregard of labor, are a disgrace to our democratic state. Happily, there are exceptions. Some industries are conducted in a manner which reflects credit on capital. Health, morals, culture, and the economic prosperity of the workers are regarded. These exceptions make us realize that what is needed is transformation of

men and methods. Greed and avarice must be checked whenever possible. Living in society and thriving on society, the social responsibility of the wealthy is self-evident. When, however, capital is obdurate in its evil ways, and abuses its strength, there is only one refuge left to the oppressed, and that refuge is Organization.

## WORKERS' RIGHTS

The right of men to organize is a natural, inalienable right. Capital enjoys it and justly. Labor enjoys it and justly. It is manifestly unjust for capital to vindicate its own right to organize and to deny the same right to workers. Nor can the State, which is founded to maintain and guard the interests of the individual and the family, invade these rights. This is one of the points in which Catholicism differs sharply from Socialism which unduly exalts the rights of the State and gives it the supreme jurisdiction over the natural rights of the individual and of the family.

In the Middle Ages, guilds of workers flourished for centuries in Catholic Europe. These great mediæval trade unions were suppressed after the Reformation in England and France, and it is only within the last century that labor has forced its

right to recognition upon the modern State. The modern State has been loath to recognize the natural right of labor to organize, a right which no State can justly contravene, a right which the Church has always defended.

Of such associations, Leo XIII says: "It were greatly desired that they should become more numerous and more efficient. They exist of their own right. . . . They cannot be prohibited," and he defines their purpose "to help the individual to better his condition to the utmost." Labor unions, then, exist to protect the weak against the strong, to help the employee in collective bargaining, to defend the interests of the worker against the aggression of powerful and organized capital. Strong and well-conducted unions generally see to it that agreements are kept.

The hostility to employers, the tendency to drift toward radicalism or into harmful political activity, the fostering of useless strikes, the limiting of output, the demand for wages independently of merit and skill,

are evils incidental to unionism but not necessary. The more intelligent and better disposed trade unionists greatly deplore these abuses and earnestly seek to remedy them. They are striving to establish industrial peace.

However, until due recognition and help come to the worker from State or employer, he will be justified by self defence in resorting to strikes. It is a natural right of man to give or withhold his labor. It is man's defence against injury and oppression. Man's right to strike is then a natural right.



## THE STRIKE

A strike can be just and may be necessary. A strike is not war, save figuratively, but like war it should be considered a last resort. Workmen should think, long and earnestly before using this weapon. They must see to it that the strike is just; that fellow workmen are not intimidated by their action; that no just contract is violated; they must weigh well the chance of success; they must ask themselves if their prospective gain will compensate for the suffering and loss inflicted on themselves, their family, and the public at large.

Experience shows that a large number of strikes have failed and failure has often been disastrous to the worker and has always lowered the prestige of the union. Partial failures have ended in compromise which might often have been reached by arbitration without the bitterness of conflict. When moral principles are not in-

volved expediency may be consulted and, even though there be cause for the strike, public sentiment may make action inopportune and seriously endanger the chances of success. Wise counsel and prudence, exercised recently in the calling off of the threatened railway strike, should then prevail. Even victory at times does not compensate for losses sustained in conflict. The strike, like war, can be justified, but, like war, it is the court of last appeal.

The State has the right to suppress a civil war, but a strike should never be civil war. Sometimes incidental to a strike, but not at all necessary, and greatly to be deplored by true friends of labor, are intimidation, disorder, riot, and violence. A strike of itself does not imply any disturbance of the peace. The State should always maintain discipline and order, but the State has no right to prohibit a just strike. That is a natural right of man. It is man's natural defence. It existed prior to the State itself, and is a right which no society can annul.

Strikes are called more frequently on account of failure to pay a just wage than for any other reason. If employers would recognize man's right to a just wage, another great milestone of progress toward industrial peace would be passed. "Remuneration ought to be sufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage earner." There should be enough for the worker and his family to live in decent comfort. There is plenty to go around in this rich country of ours and where the just wage, which often ought to be more than a living wage, is not granted by abdu-rate employers, the moral law of natural justice should be enforced.

With a just wage secured, workers in America could well learn from workers in Europe habits of thrift and frugality. The sinful extravagance of some workers is to be condemned. Extravagance is just as sinful on the part of the rich, not economically but morally. It breeds cupidity, class hatred, and envy on the part of the less fortunate. It is courting disaster. In-

ordinate attachment to pleasure, abnormal and unprecedented craving for showy luxury is out of keeping with Christian civilization and with American ideals of simplicity of life.

Christianity's idea of wealth is stewardship. Life is short. No man can take wealth with him. The rich man is bound by the obligations of charity and service—"the poor you have always with you." Even with no poverty, extravagance would be wrong. "It is lawful for a man to hold private property," says St. Thomas, but he also says: "Man should not consider his outward possessions as his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need." "Blessed is the rich man that is found without blemish: and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures."

## JUSTICE AND CHARITY

Religious ideals, then, which alone will bring lasting peace in industrial relations are the ideals of Jesus Christ—Justice and Charity. Justice alone is not sufficient. Justice looks to order and peace, but a world ruled by Justice alone with its rigid standards would be a cold world. “Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection and let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts.” Christian charity is not almsgiving. It is unselfish love. It is not mere philanthropy or humanitarianism. These can never take the place of true charity. “And if I should deliver all my goods to feed the poor and if I should deliver my body to be burnt, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

Charity sees Christ in every man. “As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.” Charity is the

characteristic and distinguishing mark of the Christian. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." It springs not from mercy but from love; not from the pity with which men regard inferiors, but from the noble Christian sentiment that we are all brothers in Christ.

## OUR DUTY

Obeying the divine command to preach Christ, we exhort all to enter upon this holy crusade to establish the reign of Christian Justice and Charity in the industrial world; to make every effort for a lasting peace. We exhort Catholic employers and employees to avoid extremists and disturbers; to be loyal adherents of the Church; to follow faithfully her teachings, that human passions being laid aside, the Prince of Peace may reign over a tranquil and contented people.

We solemnly charge those having the care of souls to instruct the people on the true religious ideals in industrial relations; to teach that peace and contentment rather than silver and gold are the richest possessions of life; to point out that religious ideals give the only true and lasting foundation of peace and happiness here and



**Publications of the Social Action Department**  
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## **PAMPHLETS**

**BOLSHEVISM IN RUSSIA AND AMERICA.** By  
R. A. McGowan (New York: The Paulist Press).

**CAPITAL AND LABOR.** By R. A. McGowan.

**A CATECHISM OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION.** By  
Rev. John A. Ryan, D.D., and Rev. R. A. McGowan. (New York: The Paulist Press).

**RELIGIOUS IDEALS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS.** Pastoral Letter of His Eminence, William Cardinal O'Connell (New York: The Paulist Press).

These pamphlets may be purchased from the National  
Catholic Welfare Council at

Price: 5 cents; 100 copies, \$3.50; 1,000 copies, \$30.00

## **BOOKS**

**THE CHURCH AND LABOR.** By Ryan-Husslein  
(New York: The Macmillan Co.).

**THE SOCIAL MISSION OF CHARITY.** By Rev.  
William J. Kerby, Ph.D. (New York: The Macmillan Co.).





